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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 MCT-01 DHA-02 EB-08 COME-00
TRSE-00 OMB-01 CU-02 /077 W

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R 291455Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9757
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Date Declassify on Reason

SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 2336

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT AR
SUBJECT: FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF MILITARY COUP

1. SUMMARY: FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF MILITARY COUP OF MARCH 24 PASSED QUIETLY ON ALL FRONTS. JUNTA ISSUED SIMPLE REAFFIRMATION OF ITS INITIAL STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLES, SOBERLY NOTED SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN GOALS SET FOR LAST YEAR, AND ASKED FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE. THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF FUTURE POLITICAL PLANS. STATEMENT WAS SIGNED BY VIDELA, MASSERA AND AGOSTI IN THEIR CAPACITIES AS ARMED FORCES CINCS; VIDELA WAS NOT SINGLED OUT IN ANY WAY IN ROLE AS PRESIDENT. CEREMONIES LIMITED TO A MASS AND TOKEN PARADE WITHOUT PARTICIPATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR OR DIPLOMATIC CORPS OTHER THAN DEAN. PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION RECOGNIZED ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JUNTA, WITH VARIOUS INTERESTS EXPRESSING OWN HOPES FOR FUTURE--I.E. POLITICAL DIALOGUE, CONTROL OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, ETC. SECURITY FORCES WERE BRACED FOR TERRORIST EFFORTS TO MARK ANNIVERSARY WITH VIOLENCE, BUT AS FAR AS WE KNOW THIS WAS LIMITED TO MINOR INCI-

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DENTS. PRESIDENT VIDELA IS NOW SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS NATION ON MARCH 31. NET RESULT AT END OF ONE YEAR, AND AFTER RECENT SPECULATION ABOUT MAJOR CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP, IS CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF SOLIDARITY IN ARMED FORCES AND CONTINUED DOMINANCE OF RELATIVELY MODERATE ELEMENTS IN GOA FOR FORSEEABLE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. ARGENTINA'S MILITARY JUNTA MARKED THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF COUP OF MARCH 24, 1976 WITH A BARE MINIMUM OF CEREMONY AND A SHORT JOINT MESSAGE. JUNTA, CABINET, ARMED FORCES LEADERS, ARCHBISHOP OF BUENOS AIRES, AND PAPAL NUNCIOK WHO ALSO REPRESENTED DIPLOMATIC CORPS, ATTENDED MASS IN MILITARY CHAPEL AND CARRIED OUT REVIEW OF CEREMONIAL HONOR GUARD FROM THREE SERVICES. CEREMONY WAS HARDLY NOTED IN MOST OF CITY. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND MILITARY COMMANDS HELD SIMILARLY MODEST CEREMONIES, ACCORDING TO REPORTS. IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA WILL ADDRESS THE NATION ON MARCH 31, A CHANGE FROM PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED DATE OF MARCH 29.

3. SECURITY FORCES EXPECTED, OR AT LEAST PREPARED PRUDENTLY FOR, TERRORIST EFFORTS TO MARK ANNIVERSARY WITH WAVE OF VIOLENCE. THERE WERE REPORTS OF A FEW BOMBS, MOSTLY OF THE CRUDE GASOLINE TYPE, THROWN AT BUSES, AND SOME TRAIN AND SUBWAY SERVICES WERE DISRUPTED FOR SHORT PERIODS BY THREATS OR SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES FOUND ON TRACKS. THIS MINOR BOMBING ACTIVITY CONTINUED THROUGH MARCH 27. THERE WERE NO PRESS REPORTS OF TERRORIST ACTIONS OTHERWISE, NO SIGNIFICANT CONFRONTATIONS WITH SECURITY FORCES, AND SO FAR OUR SOURCES IN THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOT NOTED ANY REMARKABLE UPSURGE IN TERRORIST OR COUNTERTERRORIST ACTIVITY IN LAST FEW DAYS.

4. JUNTA'S MESSAGE MARKING THE ANNIVERSARY WAS SHORT, SOBER AND CLEARLY LABELED AS THE PRODUCT OF THE THREE EQUAL MEMBERS, IN REPRESENTATION OF THE THREE SERVICES. VIDELA'S TITLE AS PRESIDENT DID NOT APPEAR. MESSAGE STATED THAT ARMED FORCES HAD HAD TO ASSUME POWER TO STOP DISINTEGRATION OF THE REPUBLIC. PRIORITY
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TASK IN PAST YEAR HAD BEEN TO ESTABLISH ORDER, WHICH JUNTA HAD PURSUED "WITH MODERATION" (CON MESURA), "...WITHOUT BEING INFLUENCED BY THE IMPATIENCE OF THE HOTHEADS OR BY THE INERTIA OF THE SKEPTICS OR THOSE WHO LACK FAITH."

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5. THE JUNTA STATED FLATLY THAT "THE BASIC DOCUMENTS OF THE NATIONAL REORGANIZATION PROCESS (ISSUED JUST AFTER COUP) ARE IN FULL FORCE," AND THAT GOALS OF FIRST PHASE ARE ACHIEVED OR ABOUT TO BE ACHIEVED. SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WAS ACKNOWLEDGED AND SACRIFICE RECOGNIZED. COUNTRY WILL NOT GO AHEAD ON BASIS OF "...REALISTIC POLICIES, OF COHERENT AND DYNAMIC GOVERNMENT ACTION, AND A HEALTHY AND BALANCED BUDGET." WITH CONSOLIDATION OF INTERNAL ORDER AND SECURITY, ADVANCES WILL BE MADE TOWARD EQUAL PARTICIPATION IN PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY, JUST DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, AND OVERCOMING THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION THROUGH FRAMEWORK OF MATURE, STABLE AND CONTINUOUS GROWTH. JUNTA CALLED

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FOR SUPPORT, SAYING: "THE JUNTA DOES NOT MAKE DEMAGOGIC AND UNFULFILLED PROMISES. IT REAFFIRMS VALUES OF MORAL CHRISTIANITY, OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR AND OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM, SECURITY AND LIFE..."

6. PRESS NOTED ANNIVERSARY AND MESSAGE WITH PROMINENT COVERAGE BUT REFLECTED MODERATION OF JUNTA ITSELF. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SPECIAL ATTEMPTS TO GLORIFY THE COUP OR THE MILITARY. UNITY OF THE MILITARY EXPRESSED IN MESSAGE HAS BEEN CAREFULLY NOTED,

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AND REAFFIRMATION OF MODERATE COURSE WHICH THE JUNTA SET FROM BEGINNING. EDITORS RECOGNIZED ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NEW GOVERNMENT, AND IDENTIFIED AREAS IN WHICH THEY HOPED FOR PROGRESS IN FUTURE, EACH REFLECTING HIS OWN POLITICAL LEANINGS IN SO DOING. AS NEATLY SUMMARIZED IN LA OPINION OF MARCH 25, THE CONSERVATIVE LA PRENSA URGED GREATER EFFORTS AT DISMANTLING THE PERONIST HERITAGE, BREAKING LABOR POWER AND REDUCING INFLATION. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BUENOS AIRES HEARALD, AFTER SALUTING, LAMENTED LACK OF PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF RULE OF LAW,
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EVEN IF ONLY MARTIAL LAW. LA NACION CALLED FOR ATTENTION TO THREE PRIORITY QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS, IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE LOWER CLASSES, AND REVELATION OF THE POLITICAL PLANS JUNTA HAS FOR THE COUNTRY.

7. RADICAL PARTY LEADER RICARDO BALBIN, QUOTED IN LA PLATA NEWSPAPER EL DIA, RECOGNIZED GREAT DIFFICULTIES FACING JUNTA WHEN IT TOOK POWER, BUT FOUND ECONOMIC PROGRESS UNSATISFACTORY AND RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY INJUSTICES, WHILE "MOTIVATION" OF PEOPLE TO SUPPORT JUNTA DRAINS AWAY. HE FOUND HOPE IN NEWS FILTERING OUT OF MILITARY COMMAND MEETINGS OF LAST WEEKS, HOWEVER, AND CALLED FOR PARTICIPATION OF CIVILIANS.

8. ON OTHER HAND, A GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS INCLUDING THE WRITER BORGES, BUSINESSMEN, ACADEMICS, AND A FORMER FON MINISTER (DEL CARRIL), ISSUED A STATEMENT CARRIED IN LA OPINION WHICH GAVE UNRESERVED SUPPORT TO JUNTA AND EXHORTED MILITARY TO CARRY ON THEIR EFFORT.

9. COMMENT: MOST NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF ANNIVERSARY IS PRECISELY THE LACK OF NEWS. JUNTA DEMONSTRATED ITS SOPHISTICATION AND RESTRAINT WITH ITS AUSTERE, SOBER, NONCONTROVERSIAL MARKING OF THE DAY AND IN THE TONE OF ITS MESSAGE. IT HAS BECOME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT MODERATE LINE HAS PREVAILED IN UPPER LEVELS OF THE MILITARY INSTITUTIONS; WE HAVE HEARD THIS FROM MANY SOURCES IN RECENT WEEKS AND IT IS REAFFIRMED IN THE MESSAGE. VIDELA REMAINS IN CHARGE AND THE MILITARY APPEAR TO SUPPORT HIM FIRMLY AS THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS, BUT STILL AN EQUAL. THE ALMOST GENERAL BELIEF AS RECENTLY AS ONE MONTH AGO THAT THERE WOULD BE MAJOR CHANGES AT THIS TIME IN THE TOP LEADERSHIP HAS PROVED ERRONEOUS. VIDELA'S RELATIVELY MODERATE COURSE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED.

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10. INABILITY OF TERRORISTS TO MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THIS IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC OCCASION IS DRAMATIC EVIDENCE OF SUCCESSES GOA HAS HAD AGAINST THEM. SOME QUESTIONS MAY EVEN ARISE IN SOME MINDS ABOUT DEGREE OF DANGER THEY STILL REPRESENT, AND CONTINUED

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JUSTIFICATION FOR RIGOROUS REPRESSIVE MEASURES OF SECURITY FORCES, BUT CONTINUED STRING OF MINOR BOMBING INCIDENTS. INCLUDING ONE IN HOTEL SHERATON, REMINDS EVERYONE THAT TERRORISTS ARE NOT COMPLETELY SUPPRESSED.

11. ON BALANCE, WE SUPPOSE JUNTA MUST LOOK WITH SATISFACTION ON THE DAY. THEIR RECORD FOR THE LAST YEAR--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS--IS NOT BAD, CONSIDERING WHAT THEY INHERITED AND ARGENTINE STANDARDS OF EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENT. THEY HAVE PRESERVED MILITARY UNITY, AND THE MAJORITY OF ARGENTINES STILL ACCEPT THEM TO DEGREE AT LEAST THAT THEY CANNOT THINK OF ANYTHING MUCH BETTER AS A GOVERNMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.

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